Update on the North Carolina preconception health strategic plan
Perinatal Health Committee
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March of Dimes

Birth defects & perinatal conditions account for ½ of child fatality

Preconception health
- Health of women and men during their reproductive years
- Focuses on taking steps now to protect the health of a baby they might have sometime in the future
- All women and men can benefit from preconception health, whether or not they plan to have children.
- Many components of preconception health focus on people getting and staying healthy overall, throughout their lives.

Healthy women
- Preconception health is important for every woman—not just those planning pregnancy.
- It means taking control and choosing healthy habits.
- It means living well, being healthy, and feeling good about your life.
- Preconception health is about making a plan for the future and taking the steps to get there!

Healthy men
- Preconception health is important for men, too.
- It means choosing to get and stay as healthy as possible—and helping others to do the same as well.
- As a partner, it means encouraging and supporting the health of your partner.

Healthy babies
- Preconception health gives babies the best gift of all—the best chance for a healthy start in life.
- Such babies are less likely to be born early (preterm) or have a low birthweight. They are more likely to be born without birth defects or other disabling conditions.
NC preconception health strategic plan, 2008-2013

- Developed by multiple partners & agencies
- Agencies chose to implement pieces of the plan relevant to their work
- Focus on:
  - healthy weight
  - unintended pregnancy

NC preconception initiatives

- Local health department agreement addenda:
  - Recommendations for postpartum visit care
  - Recommendations for BMI assessment and healthy weight guidance in the family planning and maternity clinics
  - Participated in efforts to establish EBT SNAP acceptance at farmers markets in NC
- Ready, Set, Plan curriculum trained community health coaches around the state
- Healthy Before Pregnancy high school curriculum implemented in classrooms around the state

High school curriculum

- Designed to reach first time parents with important health messages well before they become pregnant
- Includes teacher’s guide, pre/post tests, classroom and self-study activities, and PowerPoint slides
- Meets many NC Standard Course of Study objectives for Family and Consumer Science classes
- Curriculum includes five evidence-based lesson plans:
  - Pathways to Poor Birth Outcomes
  - Multivitamins: Take Them for Life
  - Healthy Weight Matters
  - Preventable Factors That Can Lead to Poor Birth Outcomes
  - Reproductive Life Planning

NC preconception initiatives

- Healthy Beginnings, Baby Love Plus, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives all incorporated preconception or interconception into their existing programs
- Partnerships within Division of Public Health to collaborate on preconception health projects
- Women’s Health Breastfeeding group established to promote breastfeeding awareness and policies that support breastfeeding; Hospital breastfeeding designation

Young Moms Connect

- Funded by National Office of Adolescent Health, 2010-2013
- Designed to assist pregnant and parenting young women (ages 13-24) in Wayne, Rockingham, Onslow, Nash & Bladen counties
- Interconception health services
- Parenting support
- Self-sufficiency activities – child care, tuition assistance

Young Families Connect

- Designed to assist expectant and parenting young adults (ages 13-24) in Wayne, Rockingham, Onslow, Nash & Bladen counties
- Focus on: health and wellness, parenting skills, self-sufficiency
March of Dimes NC Preconception Health Campaign Activities

- Provider & consumer trainings on:
  - Folic acid consumption
  - Reproductive life planning
  - Healthy weight
  - Tobacco cessation
  - Importance of early prenatal care
  - Importance of non-pregnancy medical home for women of childbearing age
  - More than 550 health care practices and thousands of providers trained
  - 100-150 lay health educators trained each year who in turn reach 5,000-10,000 women each year

- Multivitamin distribution program
  - Provides free multivitamins for distribution to low-income women of childbearing age at public agencies and safety net clinics
  - March of Dimes trained 234 agencies, including all health departments in NC and more than 100 community health centers and safety net providers
  - Trained local agencies distribute 100,000+ bottles per year

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NC preconception health strategic plan, 2014-2019

- Themes
  - Addressing the social determinants of health is critical to improving preconception health
  - Poverty is pervasive in some areas; many are unemployed or underemployed
  - Continue focus on life planning/life skills
  - Supports needed to promote mental wellness — healthy relationship skills, stress-reduction, etc.
  - Connections with community resources are challenging; systems issues, coordination, transportation, hospitality
  - Improve systems to encourage male involvement

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NC preconception health strategic plan, 2014-2019

- Process
  1. Listening sessions around state with professionals and consumers
  2. Leadership team drafted plan
  3. Feedback at NC Preconception Health Coalition annual meeting Aug 2013
  4. Final plan ready January 2014

NC preconception health strategic plan, 2014-2019

- Areas of focus:
  - Men – tailored programs & materials
  - Life planning
  - Mental wellness
  - Increasing connection to community resources & services
thank you